

## **Seminar with Dixie and Bonny Down from SD Cob's, Oxford, UK.**



The 1.st of october 2022 The Norwegian Gypsy Cob Association arranged a seminar with lecturers from the homeland of the Gypsy Cob, UK; Dixie and Bonny Down from SD Cob's in Oxford. They come from a family that have been breeding this wonderful horse for generations, and no other could be better to tell the background/history, usage, conformation, breeding etc for the Gypsy Cob than them.

Dixie and Bonny started with introducing themselves and the work their family has been doing for generations with breeding the Gypsy Cob. They are romany gypsies and proud of their background, heritage and traditions. Their horses has always played a big part of their everyday life, and they have been dependent on strong and solid horses that they can trust to do a full days work, and all kind of usage for the whole family. The temeperament of the horse has always been an important factor in their breeding, next to good conformation that makes the horse able to do the kind of work it is meant to do, like pulling a heavy load.

They explained what conformational traits that was important, and showed pictures to visualise important parts of comformation that makes a good horse for the work it is bred to do. A good Gypsy Cob must never loose it's type regardless it's height. A 15.2 hh shall have the same type and conformation as a 11 hh. A smaller Gypsy Cob must have the same amount of hair, the same heavy bone and rounded shape, as a tall Gypsy Cob. A taller horse will have a larger head, but it has to be in proportion with the rest of the body. The head of a Gypsy Cob must not be thick or heavy relative to the rest of the body (you can read more about breed type and conformation in the breed standard that the Norwegian Gypsy Cob association uses. The breed standard of TGCA (the motherstudbook) is the main source for the Norwegian breed standard). A Gypsy Cob shall never have sharp "edges", but have a rounded shape from every angle. It'scroup must not be sloping (like a ski slope), it's ribcage must be rounded, the head should be sweet, the bones should be heavy and powerful.

Hair was something that was pointed out. The lack of hair is a major fault, in other words; the lack of hair on the legs (feathering) is one of the biggest faults a Gypsy Cob can have, and the horse will not be categorized as a traditional Gypsy Cob. According to the breed standard and the Down's ladies, the hair should surround the leg from the knee down both from the back of the leg and cover the front of the hoof.

It's not just the hair that makes a good Gypsy Cob, it needs to have good conformation in addition to the hair. This is extremely important when it comes to breeding, what animals to select for breeding. The ones that is not suitable for breeding will be good horses for work and leisure, and that is also important. They all have their place.



Someone in the audience asked about the difference between a Gypsy Cob and a Gypsy Vanner, Dixie and Bonny explained where the name Vanner originated from; when the breed was exported to America a few years back, one of the biggest importers in America «invented» a new name for the breed and a registry; Gypsy Vanner and Gypsy Vanner Horse Society. This is a name that has never been used by the Gypsies and in the breeds homeland. As long as they can remember the breed has been called Gypsy Cob amongst the romany gypsies. Someone also asked about the name tinker that is used in some european countries, and what they thought about the name. They made it clear that tinker was a name they didn't like and that it was a condescending name for a gypsy/traveller, and that it had nothing to do with the breed.

Dixie and Bonny showed us pictures of horses they had 30 years back and til now. Unfortunetaley they had a stable fire where a lot of old pictures was lost, but they still had some that they shared with us. These pictures showed us the development their breeding had gone through in these years until now. The goal must always be to breed better than what you allready have, and strive to do better with time, and work with the properties that make a good Gypsy Cob.



They also showed us pictures of horses with harness to explain why a gypsy cob needed the conformation to a good driving horse. If the conformation deviates from the breed standard, it is likely that the horse will not be able to pull a heavy load, get damaged in the joints, skeleton and muscles, and will not be able to do the job it was bred for.

Show's are not «beauty contests», but gives a good idea if the horses conformation will allow him/her to do a good days work or not, be durable, in addition to a good temperament that will make it a good horse for any job it's supposed to do.





The temperament is very important. In addition to be a good working horse, it has to be a horse that everyone in the family can feel safe around, both kids and adults. The Gypsy Cob have to be calm and kind.



When breeding they are concerned with using sires and dams they know will give the good properties to their offspring, sires and dams that matches, sires and dams that can give good properties where the other one might lack something. Big heavy heads that doesn't harmonise with the rest of the body is a big fault that is difficult to breed away, and they try to avoid breeding on those horses. Both sire and dam contributes genetically, that is why it is very important to use parents with traits you want to pass on to the offspring, and to avoid using parents with traits you don't want to pass on. Not all horses should be used for breeding, but a lot of horses will be brilliant working and leisure horses nevertheless.

Someone also asked about the breeds origin, what other breeds that may have contributed to the Gypsy Cob. The answer was that the Gypsy Cob had existed for such a long time, and as far as they could remember, and their parents and grandparents could remember, it was Gypsy Cobs that was bred with Gypsy Cobs, and not with other breeds anymore.

A lot of exiting things were talked about and discussed at the seminar, and Dixie and Bonny Down was doing a great job explaining and telling, answering questions and giving good advice. They also guided the Norwegian judges through the judging of the Gypsy Cob class earlier that day at the show with 14 Gypsy Cob's.

The audience at the seminar has given feedback and thought the seminar was very interesting and educational. 30 people participated and everybody wanted a similar seminar again. The Norwegian Gypsy Cob Association will carry on inviting people with this kind of competence in the future from the breeds homeland. It is very nice that so many people came to listen. That is very motivating.

Thank you so much to Dixie and Bonny for all the knowledge they shared with us, and to the Down's family to let us use their private photos. These photos are not for other people to copy and use.

Kind regards

The board in The Norwegian Gypsy Cob Society